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DIALOGUES BETWEEN THE FEMINIST CAMPAIGN AND THE SOCIAL CAMPAIGN OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES: STORIES OF STRUGGLE AND RESISTANCE

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Abstract: This article aims to present the similarities and differences between the feminist campaign and the campaign of people with disabilities, focusing on reflections on women with disabilities, who are often made invisible in both campaigns. As a solution, it is proposed to strengthen the field of Feminist Disability Studies.

Keywords: Social campaigns; Feminism; Deficiency; Feminist Disability Studies.

INTRODUCTION

Disability and gender are categories of oppression that can be characterized as narratives culturally manufactured in the body, as can race/ethnicity. In this sense, discourses about these categories directly affect the cultural sphere, resulting in an asymmetrical and unequal distribution of power (Garland-Thomson, 2002).

The social and political organization surrounding the discussions that permeate the genre calls what we know as the feminist campaign. The feminist campaign is [...] “a complex ethical-political, analytical, critical, and deconstructive operator and serves as a magnifying glass that focuses on human relationships and the hidden aspects of these relationships” (Tiburi, 2018, l.608). Therefore, it demarcates the struggle for social justice and equality between genders, struggles for recognition and articulations of intersectional issues (Mayorga, 2014).

The social and political campaign of people with disabilities, in turn, is premised on achieving autonomy, the fight for inclusion and accessibility, equal rights and respect for human diversity (Maior, 2017). One of the main milestones of the campaign is the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted by the United Nations and incorporated into Brazilian legislation, which establishes that people with disabilities:

Those people who have long-term impairments of a physical, mental, intellectual or sensory nature, which, in interaction with various barriers, can obstruct their full and effective participation in society on equal terms with other people (Brazil, 2009).

Even with their similarities in the fight for equality and guarantee of rights, these campaigns do not recognize each other in terms of social campaigns. Just as feminism, on numerous occasions, does not incorporate disability, the political campaign of people with disabilities fails to consider feminist agendas (Lopes; Solvalagem; Busse, 2020).

Besides, this article starts from the need to build coalitions between disability and other markers of vulnerability, especially gender. This way, it locates the concept of ableism as fundamental to the proposed discussion. According to Anahí Guedes de Mello, an anthropologist with disabilities, ableism “alludes to a prejudiced stance that hierarchizes people depending on the adequacy of their bodies” (Mello, 2016, p.3272), and generalizes all people with disabilities as incapable.

THE WAVES OF THE FEMINIST CAMPAIGN AND ITS SPECIFICITIES

The feminist campaign is often classified into what literature (especially North American and European) calls “waves”, which are constituted from the implications of each current paradigm, as well as socio-historical processes, ontological conceptions and varied positions (Ribeiro; Nogueira; Magalhães, 2021).

The first feminist wave, which lasted from the 19th century to the mid-1960s, is characterized by the struggle of European, white, bourgeois women for the right to vote, education and marriage equality, in a form of resistance to forms of patriarchal social organizations., which to this day tries to restrict

female participation to the private sphere of society (Ribeiro; Nogueira; Magalhães, 2021).

In relation to the first wave, there was an attempt to erase black women, who had always been placed on the margins of the campaign. The Brazilian context also assumed the same characteristics (Ribeiro; Nogueira; Magalhães, 2021).

In the second wave of the campaign, which emerged between the 1960s and 1980s, the feminist agenda included demands such as the fight against women's overload and double working hours, the rigid demarcation of gender roles, the care of the family system as practices mostly women, sexual and reproductive rights, among other issues (Ribeiro; Nogueira; Magalhães, 2021). It is worth noting that black women were still not properly included in the campaign.

In Latin America as a whole, including Brazil, the social, historical and political context was marked by dictatorial regimes. At the national level, the position of the feminist campaign in the face of the dictatorship was not hegemonic: there was a division between groups composed of women who defended the end of the military regime, as well as "some campaigns composed mainly of upper-class women, actively supported the military coup" (Ribeiro; Nogueira; Magalhães, 2021, p. 65).

Third-wave feminism, which developed between the 1980s and 1990s, stands out as a space that begins to insert counter-hegemonic demands, breaking with perspectives coming solely from white, middle-class women. She began to consider herself diverse, black and Third World women (Mayorga, 2014).

In this scenario, third-wave feminist analyzes have an innovative brand: intersectionality. This new analytical and methodological tool is based on the observation that the dynamics of power and oppression intersect in contemporary societies (Mayorga, 2014).

Intersectional thinking considers the inseparability of social markers and their oppressive structures. It then combines markers of race, class, gender, sexuality, disability, among others (Lopes; Solvalagem; Busse, 2020). Intersecting analyzes is not just about a sum of oppressions, but rather, understanding how each social marker is in a complex interaction, intensifying different oppressions in a single identity, such as black women with disabilities.

After this phase of the campaign, the fourth feminist wave, also known as cyber-feminism, is an increasingly concrete reality, since, in short, it emerged from the position that digital media assumed in social dynamics, even affecting actions of feminist collectives (Ferreira; Lima, 2020).

The categorization of the feminist social campaign by "waves" fails to contemplate the history of the campaign as a whole, such as the witch hunt campaign between the 16th and 17th centuries and the struggle of abolitionist women against slavery (Ribeiro; Nogueira; Magalhães, 2021). However, it is still the most didactic and socially widespread form of understanding, and for this reason it was used in this article.

THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CAMPAIGN OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The social and political campaign of people with disabilities was consolidated in the 1970s, in the United States and England, by questioning conceptions of disability based on the medical model, which perpetuates dynamics of social exclusion for this public. The campaign of people with disabilities gained even more strength when it approached of the "struggle for civil rights of black people and with mass political actions (Barboza, Almeida Júnior; 2017, p. 26).

In Brazil, the struggle campaign for people with disabilities was established in the 1980s, coinciding with the political and democratic reopening, when non-governmental organizations and associations of people with disabilities encouraged the debate about social inclusion and equal rights. (Bigger, 2017).

The leading role of people with disabilities in their social and political organization reveals that these people are not just passive subjects in the consolidation of public policies, but active citizens in demanding their rights. Being a protagonist of the campaign is a form of empowerment that becomes a crucial tool for social transformation, allowing people with disabilities themselves to lead the fight for their inclusion and recognition. This idea is reflected in the motto “Nothing about us, without us”, a maxim created in these debates (Cabral Filho; Ferreira, 2013).

Still in the 1980s, the Federal Constitution of 1988 was promulgated. In this scenario, activists for the rights of people with disabilities do not support the possibility of a specific civil rights document for people with disabilities. On the contrary, they fought for the demands of this public to be incorporated into the Constitution, which gave strength and legitimacy to the campaign’s activists (Maior, 2017).

Other legal advances resulting from the struggle of this organized social campaign can be cited, such as: the creation of the National Coordination for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities (Corde), in 1986 (and which was replaced by the National Secretariat for the Promotion of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in 2009); the incorporation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities into Brazilian laws, also in 2009; and Law number: 13,146, of July 6, 2015, also known as the Brazilian Inclusion Law, or Statute of Persons with Disabilities (Maior, 2017).

This way, legal progress brings new perspectives that interfere with the perspective of human rights (which can contribute to the consolidation of inclusive paradigms). It is also necessary to point out the inequities in access that are revealed through different barriers (Cabral Filho; Ferreira, 2013). Effective inclusion starts from the elimination of access barriers, in order to promote fairer and more equitable social participation in all spheres of society. Furthermore, combating ableism is a fundamental part of inclusive practices.

Even with so many advances, the agendas of women with disabilities are often neglected and marginalized, both in relation to the feminist campaign and in the campaigns of people with disabilities (Lopes; Solvalagem; Busse, 2020). As an example, it is possible to mention the predominance of men with spinal cord injuries entering Disability Studies in academia (Mello; Nuernberg, 2012). Or, even, the lack of recognition of disability as an aspect that can mark women’s identity (Garland-Thomson, 2002).

FEMINIST DISABILITY STUDIES

As an attempt to unite the social campaigns presented here, it is proposed to present Feminist Disability Studies as a field that arises from the union of Gender Studies and Disability Studies. To this end, the knowledge produced in the area articulates the productions arising from feminist criticism of the social model of disability (Gomes, et. al, 2019).

For theorist Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (2002), Feminist Disability Studies is an academic field of investigation that aims to broaden the understanding of human diversity. By integrating the disability as a category of analysis in feminist theory, contributing to the development of intersectional studies (Garland-Thomson, 2002).

When analyzing academic productions in the field based on international literature, Brazilian researchers Ruthie Bonan Gomes, Paula Helena Lopes, Marivete Gesser and Maria Juracy Filgueiras Toneli (2019), identified four axes of discussion: the gaps in feminist studies in relation to disability; care and interdependence; sexuality, and new possibilities of intersection (Gomes, et. al, 2019).

The panorama presented so far allows the identification of similarities and ruptures between the feminist campaign and the civil rights campaign for people with disabilities. As similarities, the data gathered here allows us to affirm that both aims to reduce social inequalities, the fight for non-discrimination, the politicization of themes that are socially restricted to the private sphere and the intersectionality of multiple identities. However, the need for integration between the fields is clear, since gender and disability are commonly characterized as broadly distinct social categories.

The intersection between gender and disability challenges pre-established notions of freedom and autonomy, expanding the understanding of the inequalities that derive from it. Kafer (2013), shows us disability

as a determining dimension of the human experience, which goes far beyond the medical perspective. This recognition enables a vision where society is more inclusive where diversities are respected.

Therefore, this convergence is necessary to create strategies that can more effectively combat discrimination and promote changes in social, political and cultural attitudes that affect all people, benefiting everyone regardless of their gender and functional diversity, moving towards a society where identities are recognized and respected in their entirety.

CONCLUSION

The union between the feminist campaign and the campaign of people with disabilities is essential to confront the oppression experienced by women with disabilities and promote a more egalitarian and inclusive society. Intersectionality and collaboration between these campaigns are fundamental to overcoming barriers and building a more just society.

A society where individuals can have their rights guaranteed and respected and their potential fully exercised is the only way to obtain real and lasting changes.

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